

Welsh Food Advisory Committee Chair's Report February 2022

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WFAC 22/02/02

For discussion

Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) Chairman's report

Executive Summary

1. The attached report provides a brief summary of matters considered at the last Board meeting, held on 8 December 2021, and other activities relevant to the FSA remit in Wales.
2. Members of the Committee are invited to:
 - note the Board discussions
 - invite the Chair to expand on any issues for further discussion.

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WFAC 22/02/02

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WFAC Chairman's Report – February 2022

1. Board Meetings

1.1 The last open Board meeting, on 8 December 2021, and the preparatory discussions the previous day were held in Cardiff. WFAC Members were able to attend the Board meeting and hear how key points from our prior consideration were fed into the discussions. The Board considered the following matters:

- FSA EU Transition Policy Update: This paper reflected on the current position one year after the end of the EU transition period and focussed on future areas of four-country policy activity. I raised the impact on Welsh ports which handled goods transiting through the Republic of Ireland en route for Northern Ireland and the importance of support for the LAs that contained Wales's two main ports.
- Achieving Business Compliance Programme: This paper provided an update on the progress being made by the Achieving Business Compliance (ABC) programme, particularly on the project to look at enterprise level regulation and the work underway to quantify the level of risk posed by food sold online. I pointed out that the term 'influential businesses' referred to their market dominance, but it was open to misinterpretation that they had greater influence over the FSA and so an alternative wording should be sought.

- Science Update 2021: This paper gave the annual update on FSA's science, including: a) the role of science in the FSA; b) the benefits drawn from FSA science; c) a description of FSA science capability; d) a review of the work undertaken since the last update; and e) a summary the top priorities for the next 12 months and beyond. I reported that WFAC had welcomed that some of the science posts the FSA planned to create would be located in Cardiff, giving strong linkages to universities in Wales.
- Advisory Committee for Social Science Update 2021: This paper provided an update on the activities of the Advisory Committee for Social Science (ACSS).
- Consumer Insights Update 2021: This paper outlined the methods used to gather consumer insights, gave a summary of trends in consumers' concerns and interests, outlined key learnings from the FSA consumer insight programme and outlined the priorities for that programme in the coming year. I asked how work around consumer attitudes to Genome Edited (GE) foods was progressing. Michelle Patel said that best practice in risk communication was first to understand what information was needed and the work to gauge consumer understanding was ongoing. They were also looking at the responses to the Defra consultation on GE.

1.2 A video of the 8 December meeting is at: <https://youtu.be/IFh2w8GCyEQ> and the minutes of the meeting, when available, will be posted on: <https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/our-board#meetings>.

1.3 On 17-18 January, I attended the Board retreat, which was an opportunity for Board members to look ahead and consider strategic issues which are currently at a developmental stage. The interchange with relevant staff enabled Board members to better understand the issues and to give a steer about their priorities.

1.4 The next Board meeting will be held in Birmingham on Wednesday 9 March 2022.

2. Other Meetings

2.1 While in Cardiff for the Board meeting, on 7 December, groups of FSA Board members visited ZerotoFive at Cardiff Metropolitan University and Minton, Treharne and Davies, Public Analyst Laboratory. There were many positive reactions afterwards. That evening, Board members, FSA Executive management team and members of WFAC had a useful working dinner and discussed the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.

2.2 On 24 January, I attended the Safe and Sustainable Foods Wales (SSAFW) meeting as a participating observer.

2.3 On 26 January, I discussed with the FSA's Chief Vet the shortage of vets and ways in which recruitment might be increased.

Peter Price
Board Member for Wales and Chair of the WFAC